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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR A/S FRAZER AND USAID ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR PIERSON
FROM AMBASSADOR BELLAMY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE NEEDED TO ADDRESS EAST AFRICA
FAMINE

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1. (SBU) On March 5, I hosted a lunch for 15 Nairobi-based Chiefs of Mission in honor of visiting World Food Program Executive Director James T. Morris. The reason I was willing to press the other COMs to give up their Sunday afternoon was this Mission's growing concern about the unfolding human tragedy in East Africa due to drought and the insufficient international response to the region's emergency food needs. Morris told the gathering that his conclusion from his 11 day tour of East Africa, is that the current situation is "as bad as it gets."

2. (U) I summarized the current estimates, which show more than 11 million people in the region need food assistance within the next 12 months, including 3.5 million or more in Kenya. A recent multi-agency assessment found that approximately 395,000 MT of emergency food valued at \$221.5 million will be required to meet relief food needs of Kenya's drought-affected population through March 2007. The assessment also identified \$21.7 worth of non-food assistance needed within the same timeframe.

3. (U) I also noted my alarm that to date the international community's response has been seriously insufficient. WFP estimates that the current food commodity pipeline will run dry shortly after April, and non-cereal food items will be exhausted even before that.

4. (SBU) At the lunch, I briefly highlighted the U.S. response, which has been very important, amounting to approximately \$35 million worth of food and non-food contributions since the beginning of calendar year 2006. However, I strongly feel the U.S. needs to do more, both in our contribution and in our efforts to solicit a timely and robust response from other donors.

5. (SBU) I expect that a number of donors will soon be announcing new or additional pledges for the East African Emergency Operations (EMOP), but these will likely be insufficient. Timely announcements are critical, however. WFP informed me that it is able to use current pledges, even if actual delivery will be delayed some months, to trade for other available food in the regions and fill immediate needs.

6. (U) There is also a need for early pledges of new financial contributions. According to WFP, approximately \$13 million is required to cover associated costs of distributing the 60,000 MT of food pledged by the Kenyan Government. Therefore, almost all of current donor cash pledges will be used to cover the associated costs of distributing food in March and April, leaving virtually no emergency funds (cash or in-kind) for May and beyond.

7. (SBU) The situation is more complicated in Southern Somalia, where 1.7 million people or more are facing severe food shortages. During Sunday's lunch, Executive Director Morris noted the additional costs that go along with the Somali relief effort, including transporting most assistance overland through Kenya due to piracy threats off the Somali coast. He noted that WFP's major partners in Somalia, CARE and the Red Cross, face additional expenses for security. The U.S. has contributed \$53 million in food aid to WFP and CARE, or 65% of overall needs. Other donors need to step up to the plate. Without an immediate response from the international community, I believe there is a serious risk of a massive migration of Somalis into Kenya and Ethiopia in search of food, likely leading to increased clan violence.

8. (U) I encourage you to keep the East Africa food crisis at the top of Washington's agenda. It is important that additional U.S. resources are found to address this situation. Washington should also be at the forefront of encouraging timely and generous contributions from the other donors. We also have to keep in mind that the impact of the current drought is long-term, as failed crops and

dying livestock destroy livelihoods and eliminate meager savings for millions.

19. (SBU) Discussions regarding the emergency appeal and the impacts on communities are a good opportunity to remind other donors that much of the chronic nature of Kenya's food emergency has its roots in the GOK's insufficient efforts to implement effective rural development strategies. In Nairobi, donors are pressing the GOK on just this point, but reinforcement from capitals would be most welcome. Our own development assistance to Kenya also needs to focus on breaking this cycle of hunger.

BELLAMY